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FLASHBACK

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Cover: Royal Theatre, 1937
(Photo courtesy of: Shiloh Museum of Ozark History/ Washington County Historical Society Collection, P-338)

From the Lyric to the UArk: Fayetteville's Old Movie Houses

J.B. Hogan*

For a good portion of the mid-twentieth century, Fayetteville had four walk-in movie houses: the Ozark, Royal, Palace, and UArk. To those who remember going to these old theatres in their heyday, the recollection may conjure up a sense of joy, nostalgia, and perhaps – because they are now part of our distant and receding past – a touch of melancholy as well.

The old picture shows, with their multi-colored wall lights, stages still used for plays and live shows, and curtains that were drawn back with the first flicker from the projection room, may seem quaint today, even antiquated in the modern era of the multiplex theatre. In this older time, going to the movies was a far less common experience than it is today. Attending a motion picture was something special, even an extraordinary event to many of those who were just able to rake up enough cash for the price of admission.

In the latter nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, however, before movies came along, a series of opera houses provided locals their theatrical entertainment. The first of these establishments, operating from 1879-1886, was on the third floor of the old Van Winkle Hotel down on Smoky Row at 26 East Center (directly across from the Mountain House/Hotel which would become the Oriental Hotel and then the Mountain Inn so familiar to older city residents).(1)

The second opera house, operating from 1886 to 1905 was on the southwest corner of the Fayetteville city square at 17-19 West Mountain. This opera house was on the second story of what would become Budd's Department Store, then J. C. Penney's, and currently a brew pub. H. M.

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*The author, a frequent contributor to the *Flashback*, was awarded second place in the Society's 1st Annual W.J. Lemke Prize for this article. He lives in Fayetteville.

Hudgins of Hot Springs was the owner of the opera house but John T. Woods managed it (until 1895 when Hudgins assumed those duties as well) and it was often referred to as Woods Opera House.(2) Woods himself had a separate opera house for a brief period during the 1890s. It was located on College Street, north of where the Ozark would be built a few years later. (3)

During 1904-1905, a new opera house was built on College just to the north of Center Street and was originally called the Knights of Pythias Hall and Opera House. On June 4, 1907, the *Fayetteville Daily* (4) reported that the new hall had become the Ozark Theatre, although the new name did not become official until June 15.

Of these old opera houses, the earliest one to show the "new" motion pictures was the Woods Opera House. On January 6, 1898 an advertisement in the weekly *Fayetteville Democrat* proclaimed that in addition to its regular theatrical shows, the opera house also had "Two moving picture machines."

Given the date of the advertisement, these machines were most likely Kinetoscopes, patented in 1891 by Thomas Edison, although his brilliant young British protégé William Kennedy Laurie Dickson headed the team

Knights of Pythias Hall and Opera House, ca. 1906
Courtesy of: Shiloh Museum for Ozark History/
Washington County Historical Society Collection (P-8)

that actually invented the device. (5) These machines (viewed individually by customers) were very popular during the early days of motion pictures.

At the dawn of the twentieth century, motion picture shows in Fayetteville were predominantly of the "traveling" variety. In 1904, the Young Brothers Electric Theatre came to town and exhibited movies for eager local audiences. Where the Young Brothers Electric Theatre set up in town and how much they charged for admission is not known but the show returned in 1906 featuring a "set of moving pictures" with the overall title "Fairyland." The show, according to the *Fayetteville Daily* on May 4, 1906 "was considered very fine."

Another traveling movie show was that of Lyman Howe who presented movies at the Ozark Theatre each year from 1906 to 1909. In 1907 he brought movies of Victoria Falls; in 1908 there was a feature called "Lifeorama;" and in 1909 theatre-goers saw films of Egypt, Russia, and of a disaster in Sicily. Despite this being the era of the "Nickelodeon," the *Daily* noted that customers were charged 25 (balcony), 35 and 50 cents (lower floor) to see Mr. Howe's program at the Ozark.

The year 1907 was an important one for the movies in Fayetteville. Besides the traveling shows making their brief stops in town and a brief run in March by a theatre calling itself the Dime Electric Show (owned by a C. McDonald, the *Daily* indicated), at least two different motion picture houses tried to establish more permanent businesses.

In April, the Scenic Theatre opened on East Center Street – possibly indoors in a building just to the west of the Van Winkle Hotel. The first show at the Scenic was at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, April 5, 1907 and advertisements ran in the *Daily* through the first week of June. Admission prices were given as 10 cents for adults and 5 cents for children.

The movie house re-opened for "some weeks" in 1908 (ads were run on June 1 and 2) under the name of Smith & Kerrens Scenic Theatre, but on June 24, 1908 the Scenic closed for good. The reason for the failure was, the *Daily* said, "poor attendance." The owners took their show and left for "some point in Missouri" because, as the paper related, the owners "could not make the business pay here."

In the fall of 1907 another theatre tried to make a go of it in Fayetteville. This was the Marvel Theatre and from newspaper descriptions it was located indoors in the Hight Building on the northwest corner of the square "adjoining Skaggs Drug Store" – about two lots to the west of where the

McIlroy Plaza is today. The Marvel opened on October 16, 1907 and in addition to showing movies, it also had occasional vaudeville shows. Admission to the movies was a flat 5 cents (the standard Nickelodeon charge), but it was 10 cents for adults and 5 cents for children for vaudeville entertainment.

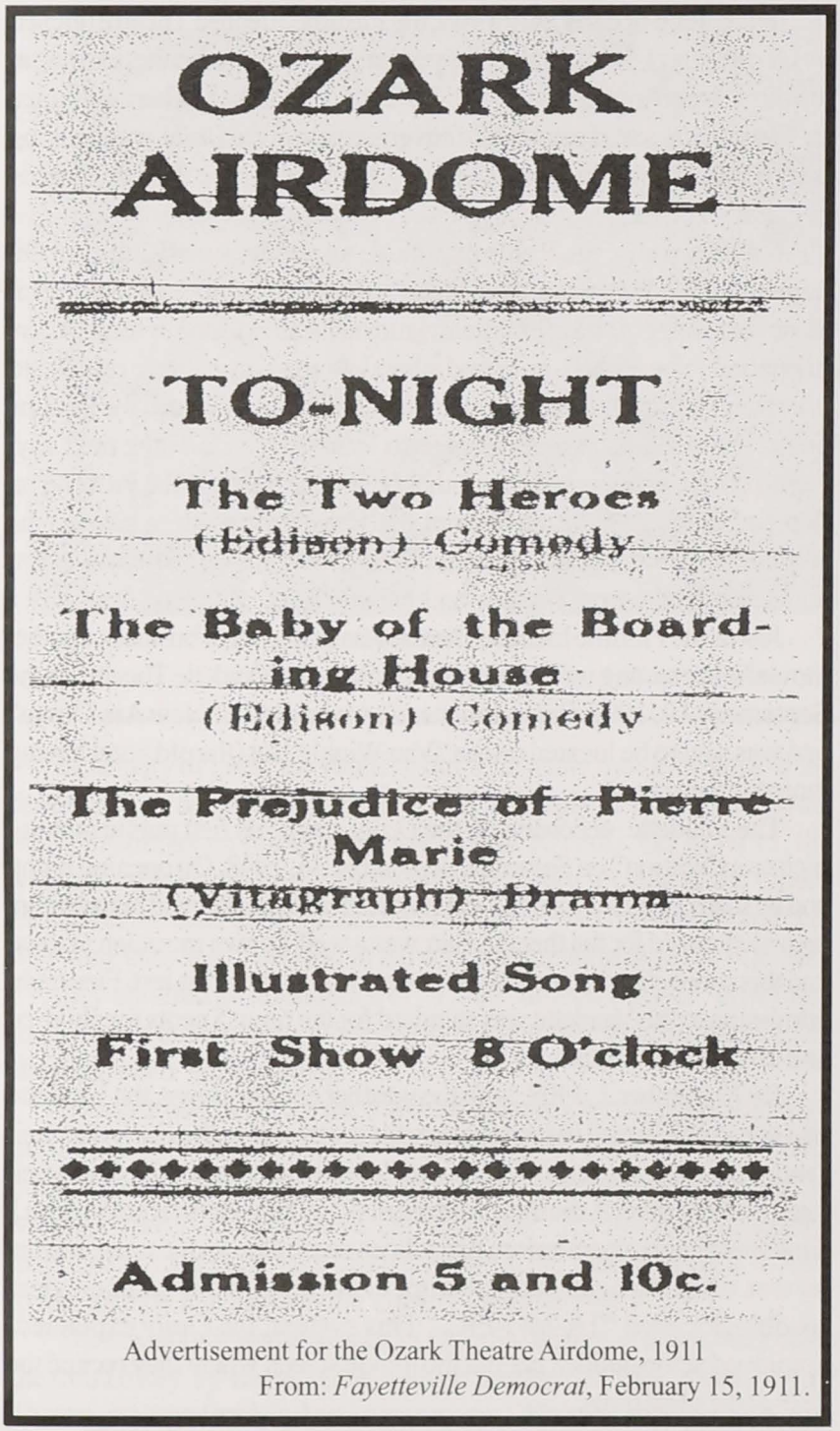
The Marvel did not last out the year, however, despite putting several ads in the *Daily* during October and November. On November 11, 1907, for example, the Marvel advertised a movie extravaganza entitled "The Life of Christ," which had been filmed in four acts, with thirty-eight hand-painted color scenes, taking up four thousand feet of moving picture film.

One of the interesting aspects of the early movie houses was that the length of film reels, in thousands of feet, was often the most important item stressed in advertisements. The owners apparently wanted customers to get their money's worth, as measured by the amount of film shown and not necessarily by the quality of the movie on that film.

As for the Marvel's success, thousands of film feet or not, it was short-lived. Their last advertisement appeared in the *Daily* on November 22, 1907 and the Marvel was soon gone from the square, forgotten by all but the eldest of Fayetteville residents, or the most ardent of local historians.

The year 1908 was yet another big year for movie houses in Fayetteville. Besides the closing of the Scenic, there was another visit by Lyman Howe's traveling show, a brief foray into the movie business (lasting only a few weeks) by a Mr. Hays, (6) and shows were displayed in the windows of Baum's Store on the east side of the square. The *Daily* told of a show at Baum's on May 30, 1908 that resulted in two boys from Madison County slightly hurting themselves while excitedly running across the square to see the movie. In all that year, Fayetteville gained four more theatres, with each striving for permanence.

All of these new theatres started out as "air domes." Air domes, or airdomes, which may be seen as precursors to later drive-in movie theatres (such as the 71 Drive-In which opened on North College in October, 1949), were warm weather establishments where films and other forms of entertainment were shown to crowds packed into roof-less structures that normally consisted of four walls, a ticket window at the front, and an elevated stage at the back where the movies were projected onto a rudimentary screen. (7)



Advertisement for the Ozark Theatre Airdome, 1911
From: *Fayetteville Democrat*, February 15, 1911.

In late June or early July 1908, the Pastime Electric Theatre opened on Center Street. It was most likely located in an airdome theatre that, at that time, stood just to the west of the Oriental Hotel. (8) This new "open air" airdome, as stated in a June 24 advertisement in the *Daily*, was "nearing completion." An ad on August 13 listed admission to the Pastime Electric as 5 and 10 cents.

Unfortunately, the Pastime came to a sudden, surprising end. On September 9, 1908, a troupe from Kansas had been booked to perform illustrated songs (a staple of the early movie theatres). One of their singers happened to be a black man and a local woman, unnamed, refused to play piano for him. The resultant hubbub immediately forced the Pastime out of business, its owners wrote in a letter to the *Daily* the next day. Based on the appearance of another advertisement for the Pastime on September 15, 1908, some attempt was apparently made to get past the "racial" incident, but it apparently didn't work for no more was heard about this theatre from that day on.

Just as the Pastime Electric Theatre was going out of business, another movie house sprung up to replace it. This was the Vaudette Theatre. In the September 10, 1908 *Daily*, this venue was called a "New Air-Dome" and was said to be located on the "Van Winkle" lot (the old hotel having recently been razed).

The Vaudette, according to the *Daily*, gave "its first public moving picture exhibition" on Saturday, September 26, 1908. On opening night, and on many nights to follow, local bandleader Frank Barr and his orchestra provided music for the theatre. Barr was a well-known musician in town and this connection to local movie houses would not be his last. First night admission to the Vaudette was standard for the time: 5 cents for children and 10 cents for adults.

By November 2, 1908, with the weather cooling down, the Vaudette had apparently found indoor quarters for it was said in the *Daily* that their "room" (with a capacity of 250) was "comfortably heated." One week later, on November 9, the theatre advertised "Talking Pictures at Vaudette." This was twenty years before real talkies came along, of course, but the ad was referring to an early attempt to get around this technological roadblock called "TA-MO-PIC." This system, the *Daily* explained, employed actors hidden behind the movie screen where they recited the lines of the silent films.

Lyric Theatre, ca. 1915
From: *Fayetteville: A Pictorial History*

In January of 1909, the Vaudette did what many movie theatres of the time did when ticket sales were slow – they brought in Vaudeville shows, but kept admission prices at the low rate of 10 cents. On April 13, the Vaudette advertised in the *Daily* that they were located at the Opera House (at the time this almost certainly referred to the Ozark) and that they were showing "2000 feet of the very latest motion pictures." On May 11, they claimed an attendance of "1,000" and on May 15, now once again using the airdome, it was reported that bad weather had forced them back into "their building."

No advertisements for the Vaudette appeared in the paper after that until May 16, 1910. Six weeks later, on July 1, there was an ad for a boxing show, and on July 27 one for "Vaudeville every night," but the Vaudette's days were numbered. On September 27, 1910, a last ad appears in the *Daily*. Like the several theatres before it, the Vaudette quietly closed, to fade silently into Fayetteville's nearly forgotten past.

The next movie house to open in Fayetteville would completely buck the trend of fly-by-night, come-and-go businesses. This was the Lyric Theatre, managed initially by two men named Whitten and Rigs (or Riggs).

The "New Lyric" (as it was referred to in early *Daily* ads) was an airdome located near the train depot at the corner of West and Dickson Streets. It opened on or about September 15, 1908 and advertised movies through October, including some that were "hand-colored." Admission was given as 5, 10, and 15 cents.

Whether the Lyric had shows during that first winter is not known, but by the following spring the *Daily* related that Frank Barr, well known local musician and orchestra leader, had taken over the theatre and begun showing movies in the same location on April 17, 1909. Some six weeks later, Barr moved his airdome from Dickson Street to 17 North Block just off the square.(9) Admission at both locations was a flat 10 cents.

For nearly five years, the Lyric remained in the same location, only using the Hudgins Building next door at 15 N. Block to show indoor movies during the winter and on rainy summer nights. Then, on December 17, 1913, Barr unveiled a new, permanent Lyric building at 101 North Block, at the corner with Meadow Street. The *Daily* described the year-round structure as being "45 x 75 feet" with "trap windows all over the house." It was "equipped with nice chairs" and there would not be "a post in the building."

The paper crowed that the movie house would be "one of the best equipped moving picture houses in the state and Mr. Barr is to be congratulated upon his progressiveness in this town." As for Barr, he was so happy with the new digs that he took out an advertisement to say: "We have heard so many complimentary remarks about our new building, we are a little swelled up and can't help it."

Through economic upturns and downturns, admission price increases (boosted by a required war tax during and after World War I), Barr kept the Lyric open continuously for many years. Early in 1910, he was the first to openly invite "negro patrons" to his theatre, and at that time, according to an article run in the *Daily*, he employed as many as nineteen people in his local operation.

Over the next years, the Lyric continued to be a fixture on the local movie house scene, providing motion pictures, live entertainment, and benefits for local causes such as the creation of a new park at College and Meadow streets in May of 1914. By February of 1917, however, the Lyric was experiencing financial problems. On February 22, an advertisement highlighted the difficulty of "keeping the theatre open at low

prices," and Barr himself wrote in the daily *Fayetteville Democrat* (May 10) complaining about "how hard it is to get good movies with the stars people want to see" and continue to "charge low prices."

Still, the Lyric stayed open. Admission went up to 15 cents for adults and 6 cents for children (both including war tax) and Barr kept the movies coming until the fall of 1918. This was the time of the great Influenza Epidemic that swept the United States killing thousands and thousands of people. Fayetteville was also hit by the malady and in the *Democrat* for October 9, 1918 the city issued a quarantine on all public gatherings, naturally including the movies. Once the city quarantine was lifted on November 2, 1918, Barr reopened the Lyric.

Despite continuing economic difficulties at the theatre, Barr kept it afloat until (as chronicled in the *Democrat* of September 6, 1919) he finally got out of the movie business altogether by selling the Lyric to E. C. Robertson of El Dorado. Robertson himself was primarily interested in opening a new theatre in the remodeled building that had once housed the Baum Brothers Store on the east side of the square.

Robertson declared (in the *Democrat*) his intention of keeping the Lyric open but only for special shows, as his interest would be in promoting a new movie house called the Victory. Occasional movies on the weekend and other entertainments (vaudeville shows and boxing matches, for example) were shown at the Lyric during the rest of 1919 and into 1920 (there was another brief, two-week long city influenza quarantine in February of 1920) but by that fall and winter the theatre was seldom used. Finally, with little fanfare, the Lyric passed into history early in 1921. Over two decades later, in June of 1945, it was razed to make room for a new building that would house the Ozark Cleaners.

Back in the fall of 1908, shortly after the Lyric had first opened for business, yet another theatre tried to make a go of it in Fayetteville. This movie house was another airdome: the "New" Princess, as it called itself from the beginning. The Princess was situated on the north side of East Center Street, most likely near the lot where the Van Winkle Hotel had stood, but its precise location is not known.

The first advertisement for the "New" Princess Theatre, in the October 5, 1908 *Fayetteville Daily*, described the movie house as having "comfortable chairs – well elevated" and listed admission prices as 5 and

10 cents. Although there was only one more ad in the paper during the rest of the year (November 4), the Princess managed to survive into 1909.

On January 24, 1909, for example, the Princess advertised that they would have "8000 feet of Motion Pictures every night this week." Ads continued to appear in the *Daily* throughout March and on April 19, responding to contemporary concerns about the morality of the "new" motion pictures, the Princess made it known to their clientele that "every reel" of file shipped to them was "inspected by (sic) Chicago Police Department." If the movie was deemed "clean" it was then sent to local distributors thereby guaranteeing that only "first class pictures" would be shown.

Despite its attempts to show only "clean" pictures, the Princess apparently was unable to develop a steady customer base. On May 26, 1909, a month after their last ad appeared in the *Daily*, the Princess was gone – yet another casualty in the competitive, volatile movie theatre scene that existed in Fayetteville during the first decade of the twentieth century.

At the beginning of 1909, the Lyric, Vaudette, and Princess theatres were all showing motion pictures in town. At year's end, however, only the Lyric and Vaudette would still be operating but early on a theatre briefly popped up on Dickson Street with one of the most intriguing names of any of the old movie houses. Located at 416 West Dickson Street, in the heart of the current club and restaurant area, this new venue went by the extraordinary name of the Bijou Dream Theatre.

Unfortunately, the Bijou Dream Theatre lasted only a very short time. Its first and only advertisement was in the February 9, 1909 edition of the *Daily*. Admission was typical of the age: 5 and 10 cents; but what movies it showed, as well as the reasons it failed so quickly are, again, lost in the mists of distant time.

The year 1910 would, however, see the arrival of another movie venue that would become something of a local staple. This new theatre was another airdome and at first it was called, simply and eponymously, the Air Dome. Located at 23 East Center Street, across College from the Ozark Theatre and the Washington County Courthouse, the Air Dome opened in 1910 with a full schedule of "vaudeville and picture shows."(10)

Admission, which didn't change during the Air Dome's first incarnation, was 5 cents for children and 10 cents for adults. When winter came, the Air Dome leased the Ozark Theatre and held their movies inside, out of

the inclement weather. On May 29, 1911, the Air Dome was rechristened the Ozark Air Dome and kept this name until the fall of 1914 when advertisements for the theatre disappear from the *Daily*.

On April 22, 1915 a new set of owners stated in the daily *Fayetteville Democrat* that they had leased the Ozark Airdome and would soon re-open the venue under the name "Skydome." The new theatre, according to the paper, was "entirely separate and apart from the Ozark management" although they would be using the same location as the "old Ozark Airdome." Admission at the Skydome would remain 5 and 10 cents, but they charged 10 and 20 cents for some special showings.

One of the more interesting programs at the Skydome was a film about Fayetteville itself, which played on September 29, 1915. This film, entitled "The Magic of the Hills," was the winning entry in a contest that had been announced in the *Democrat* on August 17. "Fayetteville To Be Seen In Movie Film," the *Democrat* front page headline proclaimed.

A professional movie production crew, the newspaper explained, one that had made a similar movie in Ft. Smith was to arrive in town on September 1 to begin filming. The Skydome offered a $10 prize to the person writing the winning scenario. Local actors were to be used in the movie.

"Fayetteville Movie Makes Decided Hit," the *Democrat* page one headline read on September 30. The lead actors were Scott Hamilton and a Miss Lillian Lawson, who had, it was disclosed, been made "an attractive offer...to engage in professional motion picture acting" by a producer who purportedly witnessed the film's debut.

Like the Air Dome before it, the Skydome used the Ozark Theatre for its winter headquarters. Shows were held inside the Ozark during the winters of 1915-1916 and 1916-1917. Early in 1917, however, the Skydome was close to the end of its nearly three-year run. The last Skydome show in the Ozark was held on February 9, 1917 and the next day the *Democrat* confirmed that the theatre had closed its indoor run at the Ozark and was looking for new quarters.

All was silent on the Skydome front until April 26, 1917 when C. W. Winkleman told the *Democrat* that he had taken over the theatre and would be opening it again early in May. On May 4, 1917, an advertisement in the paper confirmed that the theatre would begin operations on May 7, but that the outdoor venue would once again be called the Airdome rather

than the Skydome. On that opening night admission was 5 and 15 cents, with a lady or child free with each paid ticket.

Throughout the rest of the spring, summer, and into the early fall the Airdome faithfully presented its shows – never changing the basic admission price. Despite ownership's best efforts, however, this would be the last year for the Airdome. The last ad for the theatre appeared in the *Democrat* on September 26, 1917, about the time the show was usually moved indoors. This year, though, there were no winter shows. The Airdome had closed for good.

Back in the summer and fall of 1911, as the Ozark Air Dome was kicking into gear and the Lyric Theatre was completing its third year of operation, two more movie houses tried to make a go of it in Fayetteville. The first of these was more rumor than reality because it doesn't seem to have actually opened despite an August 25 story in the *Fayetteville Daily*.

On that day, the paper indicated that a new, unnamed, theatre was to open down in "Quicktown" in the "southwest part of town" (Quicktown was the area in the vicinity of the corner of what is now Sixth and Government Streets in south Fayetteville.) No more was ever heard of this proposed motion picture house.

Slightly more successful was another try at putting a theatre down on Dickson Street. This was the Orpheum Theatre located at 424 West Dickson and its owner was O. L. Champion. The first advertisement for the Orpheum appeared in the *Daily* on November 9, 1911 and other ads appeared through the middle of December.

Advertisements picked up again on February 21, 1912 and ran until March 20. A March 15 ad gave the theatre's address and its admission: 10 cents. The Orpheum lasted through the spring and into the summer but finally on August 27, 1912 its last ad appeared in the *Daily* and, like so many theatres before it, the Orpheum was heard of no more.

For several years after the closing of the Orpheum, no new theatres appeared in Fayetteville. The Air Dome and Skydome, along with the Lyric – and to a lesser extent the Ozark – provided movie entertainment for local audiences. Finally, in October 1919, only a month after he had come to Fayetteville and bought the Lyric Theatre from its longtime owner Frank Barr, E. C. Robertson of El Dorado opened the Victory Theatre in the old Baum Building on the east side of the square, simultaneously letting the Lyric fade out of the movie business.

A story in the daily *Fayetteville Democrat* for October 20, 1919 declared: "Victory Theatre to Open Oct. 27." In fact, the new theatre didn't open until Friday, October 31. Calling itself "Arkansas' Classiest Movie House," the Victory's first show, starting that evening at 6:30 p.m., was "Bonnie Bonnie Lassie" starring Mary McLaren. Admission was 11 cents for children under fourteen and 22 cents for adults – war tax included.

The Victory had a nice run in town, lasting until it was replaced by the Palace Theatre in the fall of 1926. In its seven years, the Victory survived another city influenza quarantine in February of 1920, the permanent renaming of the *Fayetteville Democrat* to the *Fayetteville Daily Democrat* on November 29, 1920, and showed perhaps its most memorable film, "Robin Hood." This Douglas Fairbanks hit played on March 17, 1923 and cost locals the extraordinary matinee price of 25 and 55 cents and 75 cents and one dollar for the evening show. All admissions included a war tax.

In early May 1925, the first indication of the eventual closing of the Victory was signaled by a story in the *Fayetteville Daily Democrat* stating that an option had been taken out on the Baum Building by an unnamed, but non-resident party. On May 30, the identity of this person was revealed. W. F. Sonneman, a motion picture entrepreneur from Waco, Texas had purchased the Baum Building.

The final affect this would have on the Victory Theatre itself was not fully known for better than a year. On September 14, 1926, an advertisement in the *Daily Democrat* reported that there was "Not much left of the Victory – Except – Very Fine Pictures." The imminent closure of E. C. Robertson's flagship theatre was undeniably clear.

On September 29, 1926, amid indications in the *Daily Democrat* of Sonneman's hurried remodeling of the Baum Building, an advertisement in the paper referred to the Victory as the "little show." With Sonneman's construction crews working three shifts in a rush to complete the new Palace Theatre, the Victory's last ad ran on Friday, October 15, 1926 and its "Last show in this house" (the Tom Mix horse opera "No Man's Gold") was held the next night, Saturday, October 16, 1926. Like so many movie houses before it, the Victory was gone, relegated to the status of forgotten Fayetteville history.

The same year that the Victory began operations, 1919, another theatre opened in Fayetteville but its existence was very brief and unsuccessful.

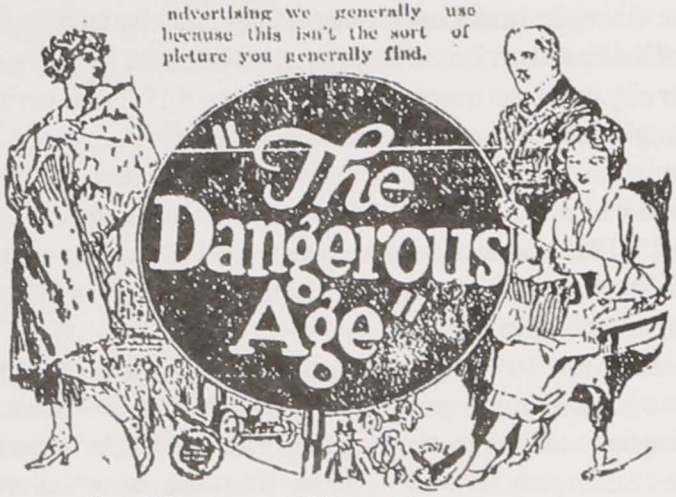
We are prepared for a furore at the

VICTORY

TODAY AND TOMORROW

Admission 10c and 30c

Note: This is not the sort of advertising we generally use because this isn't the sort of picture you generally find.



"A Woman is Most Dangerous—

If this isn't a cast of stars we've never seen one.

* * *

LEWIS STONE
RUTH CLIFFORD
CLEO MADISON
EDITH ROBERTS
MYRTLE STEDMAN
JAMES MORRISON
LINCOLN STEDMAN

—when she's 40 to 50 and can come out of the kitchen," says Dr. Andre Tidon, Ph. D., famous psychoanalysist. "She suddenly finds herself without an interest in life and goes vainly seeking excitement."

—when she's 16 to 21," says Mrs. Minnie Barton, City Mother of Los Angeles.

—when she's 26 and starts to look around," says Captain Rhein Crawford, Broadway evangelist.

—when she's 26 to 35, say the divorce records.

But What About a Man?

Get ready for all you can think of in drama, heart-hits and thrill

Advertisement for the VictoryTheatre , 1923
From: *Fayetteville Democrat*,July 11, 1923.

This movie house was called the Monarch and it seems to have lasted less than a month. The first advertisement for the Monarch appeared in the daily *Fayetteville Democrat* on November 4, 1919 and gave its location as the Rogers Building on School Street. More ads appeared in the *Democrat* that month including pleas to "Don't Forget the Monarch," but they were to no avail. The last ad appeared in the paper on November 14, 1919 and the Monarch theatre came to an unceremonious end.

After the brief tenure of the Monarch, the next theatre to open in Fayetteville was the Royal (owned and managed by department store moguls E. A. and A. L. Budd) and it would be a fixture on the south side of the square for decades to come. Contrary to dates published in the primary histories of Fayetteville, the Royal does not date from 1921 but actually opened its doors, as shown in the *Fayetteville Daily Democrat* on Friday, December 10, 1920, with the feature film "Trumpet Island." Opening night admission was 10 cents for children and 20 cents for adults.

By late spring 1921, the Royal was popular enough to inform patrons that it would be expanding its facilities. On May 13, 1921 both a front page story and an advertisement on the inside of the *Daily Democrat* trumpeted the enlargement of the Royal. The remodeled theatre would seat 1200 patrons, readers were told, and when it reopened (the scheduled date was July 1, 1921) there would not only be movies but regular vaudeville shows as well. The July 1 date turned out to be a bit optimistic, as did the size of the expansion.

During the month of July and well into mid-August, 1921, no ads appeared for the Royal in the *Daily Democrat*. Then on August 16, the theatre reappeared with an advertisement (there were ads on August 17 and 18 as well) advising customers that the Royal would open on Friday, August 19. Right on the altered schedule, the "New" Royal Theatre reopened as promised with the feature film "Reputation" starring Priscilla Dean. Admission prices were 10 cents for the balcony and 20 and 30 cents for the lower floor. According to the paper, some 960 customers attended the reopening, sixty more than the remodeled theatre supposedly could hold.

From mid-1921 until 1925, the Royal and Victory theatres provided nearly all of the movies in Fayetteville. The Ozark, which had displayed movies along with its traditional theatrical fare from 1910 to 1914, almost exclusively presented stage shows from 1915 until early in 1925. In

Advertisement for the Royal Theatre, 1923
From: *Fayetteville Democrat*,July 11, 1923.

February of 1925, as disclosed in the *Daily Democrat*, E. C. Robertson, owner of the Victory Theatre, leased the Ozark. Robertson would shortly turned the Ozark into primarily a movie house, although there was still a theatrical season if reduced in scope and size.

As noted previously, 1925 also saw another important development on the Fayetteville movie theatre scene. On May 6 an option was taken out on the Baum Building (home of the Victory Theatre) on the east side of the square. The buyer was W. F. Sonneman and one of the reasons Sonneman came to town from Texas was to get into the movie business (11) and he did so with considerable energy, eventually owning and managing every theatre in town.

For much of the next year, while the Royal and Victory competed against each other and the Ozark went through a couple of remodeling

and repair phases and began another limited theatrical season, not much was heard about Sonneman and his plans for the Baum Building – which, naturally, would directly impact the Victory Theatre. Then, in mid and late September 1926, Victory ads began appearing in the *Daily Democrat* referring to the "little" movie house's diminished facilities, which were the result of the Baum Building being under heavy reconstruction. The Victory was slowly being squeezed down and out.

On September 15, 1926, the paper told of men working hard to install the outside electric sign for the Palace Theatre and indicated that the remodeling was almost done. It was hoped that the new movie house, representing an estimated investment of $150,000 by Sonneman – an enormous amount for those days – would open in early October. Meanwhile, the Victory continued its inevitable contraction and decline.

On Thursday, October 14, 1926 the first advertisement appeared for the Palace Theatre and the next day the Victory ran its last. On Saturday, as the Victory closed down, a Palace ad in the *Daily Democrat* heralded the first movie at the new showcase theatre: "Son of Sheik," starring the recently deceased Rudolph Valentino in his "last big production."

The Palace Theatre opened officially on Thursday, October 21, 1926 at 7 p.m. with the advertised "Son of Sheik." Admission was 15 cents for children and 35 cents for adults. In the next day's *Daily Democrat*, it was reported that 1600 people had attended the premier event and the paper even ran a congratulatory editorial piece in addition to the front page news story. With the opening of the Palace, Fayetteville's stable of movie houses would be unchanged for some fifteen years, but it was hardly a stagnant time.

On October 6, 1927, one year after the Palace completed the Fayetteville theatre trinity, Hollywood released a motion picture that changed the industry and the movie-going experience almost as much as the creation of motion pictures itself. This movie was "The Jazz Singer," starring Al Jolson; it was the first "talking picture." Practically overnight, "talkies" were all the rage and movie houses around the country competed to be first with the new technology.

In Fayetteville, the first sign that the talkies were headed this way actually came in the form of advertisements from the Joie Theatre out of Fort Smith. The Joie ran ads in the *Daily Democrat* on July 30, 1928 and September 7, 1928 letting Fayetteville movie-goers know that it had the real thing: talking motion pictures.

PALACE——OZARK

Fayetteville's Fine Theatres

Music--Pictures--Presentation--Environment the Best

JULY 3-4-5 ATTRACTIONS

CLARA BOW--"Ladies of the Mob"--THOMAS MAEIGHAN "The Racket"

RICHARD BARTHLEMESS--"The Noose"---MARY PICKFORD--"Rosita"

All First Run Productions in Fayetteville

Advertisement for the Palace and Ozark Theatres, 1928
From: *Fayetteville Centennial Celebration Souvenir Program*

"Hear Them! See Them!" the July 30 Joie ad read, referring to the Warner Brothers Vitaphone talking picture "The Lion and the Mouse" starring Lionel Barrymore. The September 7 ad was even more enthusiastic, describing the film "Lights of New York" as the "First 100% All Talking Picture" and "The Greatest of All."

On February 4, 1929, the Royal made a play to be the first theatre in Fayetteville to show a talkie. Unfortunately, their management – led by J. W. Hunter, once manager of the Ozark, who had taken over the Royal late in the summer of 1927 when W. F. Sonneman became manager of both the Palace and the Ozark – chose the wrong "new" technology. The Royal, these days advertising in the paper that their admission price was always 10 cents for "Any Seat, Any Time," went with a process called Synchrotone.

As detailed in the *Daily Democrat*, The Synchrotone technique used a record with the actor's voices synchronized to the action on screen – a kind of higher tech version of the old TA-MO-PIC method (where actors stood behind the screen and recited the lines of the film) that was used by the Vaudette Theatre back in 1908. The Royal ran their Synchrotone movies for three days and nights and got a good write-up in the *Daily*

Democrat although the paper did comment that the "banjo player also was reported to be very good." Not an especially ringing endorsement.

On February 5, 1929, at the exact time the Royal was trying its experiment, the Ozark stole all the local movie thunder by announcing in the *Daily Democrat* that the "Highest Type Talking Pictures" were coming there soon, even setting a tentative date of either February 20 or 21. On February 7, the paper related that the "First Talking Screen of Kind in Country Received at Ozark."

Because Robert Levy – a New York City engineer contracted to install the new equipment at the Ozark – was delayed in coming to town, the opening of the talking film was put off as well. On March 5, 1929 a new hoped-for date was set for "Talking Films Opening at Ozark": March 15. The Ozark just missed this date but on Saturday, March 16, 1929 a large, bold-font headline on page one of the *Daily Democrat* declared that "Photophone Marks New Era In Fayetteville."

The first talking picture in town, using the Photophone system, was a two o'clock matinee at the Ozark on Monday, March 18, 1929 with three follow on shows later in the day. The first feature talkie was "Mother Knows Best" starring Madge Bellamy. This historical program, which the paper said "Places City On Map As One Of Most Progressive In State," had a temporary admission price of 50 cents.

Once the Ozark was established as the talking pictures leader in the city, the Palace and Royal theatres hurried to follow suit. Despite several *Daily Democrat* ads declaring it would soon have talkies, the Royal was aced out for second place in the sound picture sweepstakes by the Palace. On Monday, June 3, 1929 the Palace introduced its Vitaphone system with the feature "On Trial" starring Pauline Frederick. Admission was 10 cents for children and 35 cents for adults.

The Royal kept trying to get their own talkies and, after several delays and postponements, at 7:15 p.m. on Monday, June 17, 1929 the "little theatre that could" finally began its own sound era with the movie "Times Square" starring Arthur Lubin and Alice Day. An article in the *Daily Democrat* stated that the Royal system was called a "Photo Talker" and had been installed by a Dallas, Texas. Admission for the first talking picture at the Royal was 10 cents for children and 25 cents for adults.

Following the introduction of sound films in Fayetteville, the Royal, Palace, and Ozark remained the city's only movie theatre options for more

than ten years. During this stretch of time, the Royal took up several of the non-movie headlines.

On July 21, 1932, an article in the *Daily Democrat* disclosed that an acting stock company, the Orpheum Players of Springfield, Missouri, had leased the Royal for a two week stay. The group put on stage shows between screenings of movies and took up residence in local apartments. The manager brought in for the duration of the lease was a man named W. S. Sutherland, who was expected to remain in town to run the Royal when the group moved on.

After the Orpheum Players moved on, however, nothing more was heard of the Royal until November 2, 1932 when an advertisement appeared in the *Daily Democrat* announcing a "New Sound" and "New Manager" at the theatre beginning that day. The first movie under the unidentified new management was "Makers of Men" starring Jack Holt.

On April 7, 1933, Royal management changed again when W. F. Sonneman leased the theatre from E. A. Budd. This made Sonneman the controlling party at all three movies in town. The latest incarnation of the "New" Royal would, Sonneman told the *Daily Democrat*, "feature first run Western pictures each weekend and second run pictures of other kinds during the remainder of the week." Admission prices at the Royal, Sonneman said, would continue to be "at a smaller price" than "either the Ozark or the Palace."

For the next few years, the local movie business scene settled in under Sonneman's solitary guidance, but then part of that empire went up in flames. On Monday, January 15, 1940, the Royal burned to the ground in a fire that also claimed the adjacent Budd's Mercantile and the Royal Barbershop and Café as well. As described in the *Northwest Arkansas Times*, the theatre was a total loss but the Budd brothers (who owned the property) and Sonneman (with a long term lease on the Royal with the Budds) immediately went to work restoring their burned out businesses.

The next day, January 16, E. A. Budd outlined plans to rebuild the mercantile and the Royal. W. F. Sonneman told the paper that he was not only going to help rebuild the Royal but also planned to construct a new theater on Dickson Street, too, although the exact location and name was not yet known.

Never one to procrastinate, Sonneman was back in business with the rebuilt Royal on Thursday, May 23, 1940, with the feature film "Frontier

Ozark Theatre, 1940
Courtesy of Shiloh Museum of Ozark History/
Washington County Historical Society Collection (P-43)

Town." The admission listed in the *Times* was 15 cents for all comers on opening night, but by the weekend the regular prices of 10 cents for kids and 20 cents for adults was in effect.

With the Royal, Palace, and Ozark already his, Sonneman went to work on making his dream of a building a theatre on Dickson Street that would cater primarily to the university crowd become reality. It didn't take long for that goal to be reached. Before the end of 1940, a series of modern, yellow brick buildings – including a movie house – went up on the western edge of Dickson Street near the University of Arkansas.

On Wednesday, January 16, 1941, the last of the old-time indoor movie theatres opened at 645 West Dickson Street with the expressed intent of showing pictures that would be "especially selected to appeal to the University crowd." With a blitz of advertisements, self-promoting news stories, and congratulatory greetings from other businesses in town scattered throughout that day's *Times*, the UArk Theatre presented "Haunted Honeymoon" starring Robert Montgomery on its gala first night.

Admission for the evening was a flat 30 cents – including a 3 cents defense tax and a 1 cent sales tax.

Along with its sister establishments, the opening of the UArk gave Fayetteville its four theatre complement so familiar to those living here in the 1940s and 1950s. During these years, local movie-goers came to consider the Royal, Palace, Ozark, and new UArk as fixtures in town – as unchanging as the courthouse, the jail, or Old Main on the University of Arkansas campus.

In the summer of 1948, local film fans learned that after years of owning and managing all of Fayetteville's theatres, W. F. Sonneman had made the decision to divest himself of his movie empire. On July 1, he put an advertisement in the *Times* for an all children's show that "Old Man Sonneman" was presenting as a way of "saying Good Bye."

It was related in the paper of July 3, 1948 that the Malco Theatre Group, with Loris Stanton as the new local manager, had taken over all four movie houses in town and that the Ozark Theatre would be closed some months for "extensive remodeling." That same day, several local businesses ran advertisements thanking W. F. Sonneman for his contributions and also welcoming the new Malco management. In the days and weeks ahead, while the Ozark was being redone, the Malco Group ran consistently large, eye-catching ads for the Palace, UArk, and Royal.

Then, on Friday, October 22, 1948, the *Times* declared: "New Ozark Theater To Open Monday." The article described the "new" Ozark with its seven hundred and thirty "leather and velour covered" seats, five hundred and eighty-eight yards of carpeting, new "Super Simplex" projector, its fine new tile bathrooms, and a concession stand built in the rear of the theatre. On Monday, October 25, 1948, the refurbished Ozark opened for business with the feature film "The Saxon Charm" starring Robert Montgomery and Susan Hayward.

During the next decade, the four theatres evolved into the establishments that most people of the era remember. The Royal was the cheap theatre, the kids matinee theatre, the fading, decaying home of the B-Western movies. The Palace, after closing in late 1953 for an extensive remodeling, came back strongly in early 1954 and for several years thereafter with higher admission prices, an improved décor, and movies a bit older or less successful than those playing down at the Ozark.

The UArk continued to be the university theatre, often showing racier, more adult-oriented films, while the Ozark maintained its refrigerated coolness as the finest theatre in town with the newest pictures and finest ambience.

Nothing, of course, lasts forever and that cliché is especially true in the movie theatre business. Time, the growth of television, the arrival in town of the first multiplex theatre (as recorded in the *Times*, the Malco Twin Cinemas opened August 26, 1970), and the decline of city centers – even ones as small as Fayetteville's – began to drive the old movie houses out of business.

One by one these theatres, no longer in the hands of local, individual entrepreneurs like W. F. Sonneman, dropped by the wayside. The Royal, usually hanging on by a thread anyway, was the first to go. Its last show, as advertised in the *Times*, was a double-feature on Sunday, February 5, 1956. The twin-bill starred John Wayne in "Old California" and Johnny Weissmuller in "Tarzan and the Ape Man."

The Palace lasted almost two decades longer than the Royal but by the spring of 1969 it was no longer showing movies. From then until the spring of 1974 it mostly put on live country music shows like the Ozark Opry, usually on Friday evenings in the summer. On May 16, 1974, with the destruction of the east side of the square imminent, a final advertisement in the *Times* noted the "last" Arkansas Country Opry music show (on Friday, May 17) and the Palace, like so many movie houses in town before it, dropped into the black hole of forgotten, or nearly forgotten, Fayetteville history.

The Ozark, on the other hand, continuously operated as a movie house right up until the day its doors were closed forever. Although it remained a part of the Malco theatre chain, the Ozark suffered from the growth of the dual screen venues then taking hold in Fayetteville. By the mid-1970s, film patronage was shifting northward, out Highway 71 (the Malco Twin Theatres) and up to the new Northwest Arkansas Mall (the Malco Mall Twin Theatres).

In the spring of 1977, Malco announced in the *Times* that they would be opening the Razorback Twin theatres on North College. With the arrival of the Razorback Twins, the Ozark was odd theatre out. On Tuesday, April 19, 1977, the Ozark showed its last feature "Raggedy Ann and

Andy," a musical. With that final program, over seventy years of theatrical shows, vaudeville, and movies came to an end.

Although no longer a part of the Malco chain, the UArk remained a continuously operating movie house – even splitting into the UArk (1, 2) with the former showing "art" films – through the spring of 1974. Then, after being off local radar for over eighteen months, it re-emerged in late December 1975, still as twin theatres and still showing mostly art and retro films. By the spring of 1976 it was a single theatre again and remained so through March of 1977 when its ads dropped out of the *Times*.

After another eighteen month hiatus, the UArk reappeared in the middle of October, 1979 calling itself the UArk Arts Center. Movies, again mostly art and retro films, were shown on the weekends into 1980. In July of 1980, its name changed again, this time to "Alternative Films/UArk" but

Advertisement for the Ozark Opry at the Palace Theatre, 1966
From: *Northwest Arkansas Times,* July 18, 1966

its movies were still of the arty and retro variety. Finally, in late 1980 the UArk closed its doors for good.

On Saturday night, December 13, 1980 the UArk ran an advertisement in the *Times* for its final movie: "Foul Play" starring Goldie Hawn and Chevy Chase. The last of Fayetteville's original old indoor movie houses was gone.

Today, there is not a single trace of the Palace or the Royal left. Urban renewal and the destruction of the square saw to that. But the UArk marquee can yet be seen on West Dickson Street (the building currently houses a variety store) and the Ozark building, saved and renovated in the mid- to late-1990s through the efforts of Jonathan Story (a junior high student at the time) and local businessmen (like banker John Lewis), still stands where the original Knights of Pythias Hall and Opera House did on College Avenue next to the Courthouse.

Although these faint memories are perhaps not enough to fully remind Fayetteville of its movie theatre past, at least something remains of those bygone days. The aging UArk façade and the restored Ozark building now stand as partial symbols of a distant era, as echoes of a time long gone, an age nearly lost. And until the last person who attended one of these movie houses is gone, the old theatres that once graced Fayetteville will remain in our collective local memory and will not have been completely lost or forgotten in time.

Fayetteville Theatres – Time Line

The following list summarizes, in mostly chronological order, the old time movie theatres and venues in Fayetteville from 1898 to the closing of the UArk in 1980.

Fayetteville Opera Houses/Stage Theatres:

Opera House
Location: Van Winkle Hotel, 26 E. Center Street, third story
Years: 1879-1886

Woods Opera House
Location: Southwest corner of the Square, 17-19 W. Mountain, second floor

The old UArk Theatre, now a retail shop, 2006
Photograph courtesy of Tim Nutt

Years: 1886-1905 later Budd's Dept. store, later Penney's, currently a brew pub.
John T. Woods, Manager, 1886-1895; H. M. Hudgins, Hot Springs, Owner/Manager, 1886-1905

Woods Opera House
Location: North of where the Ozark Theatre would be located, on the same side of College Street
Years: 1892-1896 (ca.)
John T. Woods, Owner/Manager

Knights of Pythias Hall and Opera House
Location: Next to old Washington County courthouse on College, built in 1904-1905; renamed the **Ozark Theatre** (1907)
Years: 1904-1907

Tent shows: general entertainment performances appearing in town at such locations as the corner of Meadow and College, the Stone lot on East Center Street, and often during the 1910s and 1920s on the Boles Lot (just south of Lafayette and west of St. Charles Streets)

Fayetteville Theatres (Motion Pictures):

Opera House – Indoors
Location: Southwest corner of the Square, 17-19 W. Mountain
Years: 1898
Admission: Unknown

Young Bros. Electric Theatre – Temporary traveling show
Location: Unknown
Years: 1904, 1906
Admission: Unknown

Lyman Howe's "moving picture show" – Indoors, temporary traveling show
Location: Ozark Theatre (Knights of Pythias Hall and Opera House)
Years: 1906-1909
Admission: 25, 35, and 50 cents (1907 and 1909)

Dime Electric Show
Location: Unknown
Years: 1907

Admission: Unknown
Opened: March 25, 1907; C. McDonald, owner
Closed: 1907

Scenic Theatre
Location: East Center Street
Years: 1907-1908
Admission: 5 cents children, 10 cents adults (1907-1908)
Opened: April 5, 1907
Closed: June 24, 1908

The Marvel – Indoors
Location: Hight Building, northwest corner of the Square
Years: 1907
Admission: 5 cents, movies; 5 cents children, 10 cents adults, vaudeville shows (1907)
Opened: October 16, 1907
Last ad: November 22, 1907

Baum's Store – Indoors (store window), temporary
Location: East side of the Square (where Victory and Palace were located later)
Years: 1908
Admission: Unknown

Mr. Hays - Temporary
Location: Unknown
Years: 1908
Admission: Unknown

Pastime Electric Theatre – Air Dome
Location: Unknown
Years: 1908
Admission: 5 cents and 10 cents (1908)

Vaudette Theatre (Air Dome – originally; also indoors)
Location: Van Winkle lot, on north side of East Center St.
Years: 1908-1910
Admission: 5 and 10 cents (1909-1910)
Opened: 1908
Closed: 1910

Princess Theatre (Air Dome)

Location: East Center St., probably south side next to Oriental Hotel (later Mountain Inn)
Years: 1908-1909
Admission: 5 and 10 cents (1909)
Opened: October 1908
Closed: May 1909

Lyric Theatre (Air Dome – originally)
Location: At (near) the depot (West and Dickson streets), 1908; 15-17 N. Block (until 1913); thereafter, 101 N. Block
Years: 1908-1921
Admission: 5, 10, and 15 cents (1908); adults 15 cents and children 6 cents, including war tax (1917)
Opened: 1908
Closed: 1921

Bijou Dream Theatre
Location: 416 W. Dickson
Years: 1909
Admission: 5 and 10 cents (1909)

Orpheum Theatre
Location: 424 West Dickson; O. L. Champion, owner
Years: 1911-1912
Admission: 10 cents (1912)
Opened: November 1911
Closed: August 1912

Victory Theatre
Location: 10-12 S. East (east side of Square in Baum Bldg.); E. C. Robertson, owner – El Dorado, AR
Years: 1919-1926
Admission: 11 cents under 14, 22 cents adults (1919)
Opened: October 31, 1919
Closed: October 16, 1926

Air ("Ozark") Dome – Air Dome (and inside Ozark Theatre)
Location: 23 E. Center Street (across from courthouse and Ozark Theatre)
Years: 1910-1914, 1917
Admission: 5 and 10 cents (1911-1914); 5 and 15 cents (1917)
Opened: 1910 as Airdome; Renamed Ozark Air Dome on May 29, 1911

Rented Ozark Theatre in winter, 1910-1914
Closed: October 1914 and again in September 1917

Sky Dome – Air Dome (and inside Ozark Theatre)
Location: 23 E. Center Street (across from courthouse and Ozark Theatre, using the Ozark Airdome structure in summer, then moving into Ozark Theatre in winter, 1915-1917)
Years: 1915-1917
Admission: 5 and 10 cents; 10 and 20 cents for special movies (1915-1917)
Opened: Late April or early May 1915
Closed: April 1917

Ozark Theatre
Location: 4 North College
Years: 1905-1977 (theatrical and vaudeville shows, boxing matches, movies)
Admission: 5 and 10 cents, movies; 10 cents balcony and 15 cents floor, vaudeville (1910-1911)
Opened (as opera house): 1905 (built by Knights of Pythias, 1904-1905); changed to Ozark Theatre, June 15, 1907; Owner/Manager: W. D. McNair (early 1910s); W. F. Sonneman (1927-1948); Malco Theatre Group (1948-1977)
Winter play season – late September or early October until late March
Closed: April 19, 1977

Monarch Theatre
Location: Rogers Building on School Street
Years: 1919
Admission: 5 cents, children under 12; 10 cents, adults – war tax included (1919)
Opened: About November 8, 1919
Closed: About mid-November 1919

Royal Theatre
Location: 13 W. Mountain (south side of Square)
Years: 1920-1956
Admission: 10 and 20 cents (1920)
Opened: December 10, 1920; E. A. Budd and A. L. Budd, owners/managers; W. F. Sonneman, owner (1933-1948); Malco Theatre Group (1948-1956)

Closed: February 5, 1956

Palace Theatre

Location: 13 S. East (east side of Square); took over Victory Theatre space (Baum Building)

Years: 1926-1974

Admission: 15 and 35 cents (1926)

Opened: October 21, 1926; W. F. Sonneman, owner; Malco Theatre Group (1948-1974)

Closed: May 17, 1974

UArk Theatre

Location: 645 W. Dickson

Years: 1941-1980

Admission: 30 cents (1941)

Opened: January 16, 1941; W. F. Sonneman, owner; Malco Theatre Group (1948-1970s)

Closed: December 13, 1980

ENDNOTES

1. Campbell, William S., *One Hundred Years of Fayetteville, 1828-1928* p. 90.

2. *Ibid.*

3. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Fayetteville, AR, July 1908.

4. *Fayetteville Daily*, Fayetteville, AR, June 4, 1907. Subsequent references to Fayetteville newspapers, including the *Fayetteville Democrat* (weekly), the *Fayetteville Daily Democrat*, and the *Northwest Arkansas Times*, will be made in the text.

5. "History of Edison Motion Pictures: Origins of Motion Pictures – the Kinetoscope," online article, http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/edhtml/edmvhist.html.

6. Campbell, p. 90.

7. Valentine, Maggie, *The Show Starts on the Sidewalk: An Architectural History of the Theatre*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), p.23.

8. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, July 1908.

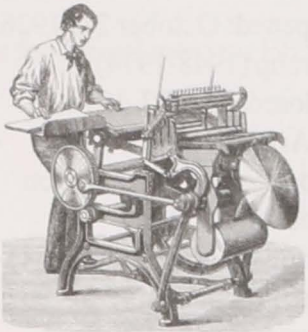
9. Campbell, p. 90.

10. *Ibid.*

11. Sonneman, Emil H., Ozarks Regional Library, Oral History Project, Mullins Library, Special Collections, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, p.1.

Second Annual Lemke Prize Competition Open for Submissions

The Washington County Historical Society announces the 2nd Annual W.J. Lemke Prize competition. Anyone interested in Washington County history, whether a professional or amateur historian, is encouraged to enter. Topics can be on any phase of Washington County's history or archeology, deal with an individual or institution connected with the county, and can address any time period.



The winning article will receive $300; Second prize receives $200. Both winners receive framed certificates. Winners will be recognized at the annual ice cream social in August 2009.

Manuscripts will be judged on their contribution to the expansion of the county's history; the originality of the subject; and, the use of primary and secondary sources. The manuscripts must be original material, and not have been previously published; no more than 40 pages, typed, and doubled-spaced. Footnotes should be included on separate, double-spaced pages, although they do not count toward the 40-page limit. The title page should contain the heading "W.J. LEMKE PRIZE," the full title of the manuscript, the author's name, mailing address, telephone number, and email address.

Entries become the property of the Washington County Historical Society and will not be returned to the author. All papers will be considered for publication in the *Flashback*. The Society reserves the right to award one or no prizes.

Copies of all entries in the Lemke Prize will be deposited with the Special Collections Department at the University of Arkansas Libraries. Entries may be mailed to Tim Nutt, Washington County Historical Society, 118 E. Dickson Street, Fayetteville, AR 72701, or emailed to timn@uark.edu by **May 31, 2009**. If the entries are emailed, they should be either in the PDF or Microsoft Word format.

For additional information on the W.J. Lemke Prize, please contact Tim Nutt at the above address or at 575-8443 or timn@uark.edu

Vanishing and Forgotten Family Cemeteries

Raymond R. Tharp*

Sad, but it is true, family cemeteries fit into this category. As descendants of the old ancestors move away and become more distant in linage, the old family cemetery becomes neglected and is pushed into the far recesses of memory. In that position, they are rarely thought about and this causes them to slip into the land of the "Vanishing, and Forgotten."

In most cases, new owners of the land where the old cemetery lies will respect the right of family members visiting the gravesites of their departed ancestors. But as time goes by and visitations become less and less, the cemetery will fall into a state of neglect and become grown up with weeds, briers, bushes, and trees.

This seems to be so about the Roberson Cemetery in Washington County, Arkansas. In viewing the list of cemeteries on the Washington County web site, (1) I found no mention of Roberson Cemetery. Although the book Cemeteries of Washington County, Arkansas, Volume VIII, Fall, published in 1985 by Northwest Arkansas Genealogical Society does list the name of the cemetery and the names of those buried there on page seventy-six. It also stated:

> "Located about 3 ½ miles south of Sulphur City on west side of road to Arnett. On Lewis farm, S3, TI4N, R29W. Cemetery is overgrown, enclosed by a stone fence, about 30 yards from road. Read October 9, 1984 by Bitsy and George Crabtree." (2)

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*The author, a retired educator, is a descendant of Daniel and Susannah Wax Howry, both of whom are buried in Roberson Cemetery. He lives in Temple, Texas.

George W. Roberson, the son of John and Priscilla (Howry) (3) Roberson, was the first person buried there. He died January 14, 1851. He was only eleven years old. (2)

The 1850 Federal Census showed that George lived with his parents at residence 58 in the White River Township in the county of Washington in the state of Arkansas. He had seven brothers and sisters living at home, the oldest being twenty-one and the youngest being four. The four-year old was born in Arkansas in 1846. The others were born in Tennessee. (4) This would indicate that George was probably about five years of age when the family left Hawkins County, Tennessee and moved to Washington County, Arkansas. What a marvelous record it would be if we had the stories he told about his journey from Tennessee to Arkansas.

During the next thirty-seven years, several other family members were buried in this family cemetery. (2) They were:

Susannah (Wax) (5) Howry. (2)
There is no date of birth or death given. We do know that she is on the 1850 census of Arkansas so her death would be after 1850.

Daniel Howry. (2)
His date of death was September 6, 1863.
Daniel and Susannah (Wax) Howry were the grandparents of George.

James L. Roberson. (2)
His date of death was August 11, 1864.
James was the son ofT. H. and D. Roberson. He was only one year and six months old. This young child would be Georges's cousin.

John Roberson. (2)
Hisdate of birth, July, 1803 and date of death, August 18, 1883. He was eighty years old.

Priscilla (Howry) Roberson. (2)
Her date of birth, January 25, 1806 and date of

death, March 30, 1884.
She was the wife of John.
John and Priscilla (Howry) Roberson were the parents of George.

Infant daughter of John H. and Sarah A. Roberson. (2) Her birth and death date was October 7, 1887.

Sarah A. Roberson. (2)
Her date of birth, July 13, 1866 and date of death, November 5, 1887. She was the wife of John H. Roberson.

An article in the November 25, 1887 issue of the *Fayetteville Democrat* stated,

> "Sarah Arizona Roberson, wife of John H. Roberson and daughter of the late Dr. John C. and Hala M. Carter, of Carter's Store, was born in Washington County, Arkansas, on the 13th day of July, 1866, and died on the 5th day of November, 1887 .... She was buried at the family burying grounds near her home on the 6th of November at 3:00 o'clock." (6)

John H. Roberson. (2)
His date of birth, April 10, 1852 and date of death, October 9, 1888. According to the record of burials in the Roberson Family Cemetery
John H. was the last person buried there. John was George's brother.

Family surrounded George during his lifetime. A close look at the 1850 Federal Census of the White River Township in the state of Arkansas verifies this. As stated earlier, George lived with his parents at residence 58. Residence 59 was occupied by Robert Roberson and his wife Matilda (Tharp) (7) Roberson and their two children. Residence 60 was occupied by Jesse Tharp and Eliza (Roberson) (8) Tharp and their two children. Residence 117 was occupied by Daniel Howry and his wife Susannah

(Wax) Howry. Residence 116 was occupied by Lewis Tharp and his wife Judy (Vernon) (9) Tharp and their daughter Lucy. (4). All of these folks are intertwined in some way with the Roberson family.

Even after his death, he is surrounded by family members in the Roberson Family Cemetery. It is true, many old family cemeteries fade into the background as descendants of the old ancestors move away and become more distant in linage. Indeed, these cemeteries do seem to vanish with time. Hopefully, these family cemeteries will be moved from the land of the "Vanishing, and Forgotten" to the land of the "Preserved, and Remembered."

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3. *History of Benton, Washington, Carroll, Madison, Crawford, Franklin, and Sebastian Counties Arkansas*. (Chicago: Goodspeed Publishing Company, 1889. Reprint Easley, SC: Southern Historical Press, 1978.) See biography of Benjamin F. Boone online at www.arfamilies.info/affamwashington.htm

4. 1850 Federal Census of Washington County, Arkansas.

5. Marriage Record of Daniel Howry and Susannah Wax is on file in the Botetourt County Courthouse, Virginia.

6. Obituary, *Fayetteville Democrat*, November 25, 1887.

7. Marriage Record of Robert Roberson and Matilda Tharp is on file in the Washington County Courthouse, Arkansas

8. Marriage Record of Jesse Tharp and Eliza Roberson is on file in the Washington County Courthouse, Arkansas.

9. Marriage Record of Lewis Tharp and Judy Vernon is on file in the Hawkins County Courthouse, Tennessee.

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Red in Fayetteville

Martha Gould England*

A sea of red dressed fans cheer
their beloved Razorbacks.

Red razorbacks adorn cars, windows,
hats, foreheads, and signs.

Hills of the Ozark Mountains wear their
red apparel of maple splendor.

Red bricked Old Main, the oldest building
on the Arkansas campus, houses a

Faculty to open the minds of her
children to higher learning.

Yes, in October, my heart returns to my
love of red in Fayetteville.

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*The author is a native of Fayetteville and a graduate of the University of Arkansas. She lived in Dallas, Texas for over 40 years and currently resides in Atlanta.

Membership Application Form

Washington County Historical Society

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1. Give outright a certain amount before the end of 2008 to take your tax deduction.
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